

**CORTICARIA FAGI (WOLLASTON) (COL.: LATRIDIIDAE)
IN SUFFOLK AND SUSSEX**

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CORTICARIA FAGI (Wollaston) is among our rarest and least known beetles. It was allocated RDB 2 (Vulnerable) status by Shirt (1987) but Hyman & Parsons (1994) revised this to RDB I (Indeterminate) because of insufficient information upon which to assess its *Red Data Book* status. *C. fagi* was added to the British list by Allen (1937) (as *aequidentata* sp. n.) on the basis of a single example taken in Windsor Forest in July, 1936. The specimen was later examined by Hansen who found it to be identical with Danish examples of *pietschi* Ganglbauer. Johnson (1974) subsequently compared the British beetle with examples of *Corticaria fagi* taken by Wollaston on Madeira in 1850 (and which were later used to describe the species) and found them to be conspecific.

Although widely distributed in Europe, *C. fagi* appears to be genuinely rare and of sporadic occurrence. Johnson (*op. cit.*) refers to the existence of authentic records for France, Denmark, Germany, Poland, Austria and Rumania. Rucker (1992) was only able to add southern Sweden to this list, but cites both West and East Germany as sources of records.

Detailed field data concerning *C. fagi* seems to be sparse. Wollaston (1865) says of his species that "it has been observed hitherto only in the wooded regions of Madeira proper – particularly in the north of the island. It seems to be attached principally to the Spanish chestnut-trees." In view of this last observation it seems rather surprising that he then named the beetle after the beech! The original Danish record – and the only one for that country known to me – is given in Hansen (1951; 1964) and is both interesting and informative *viz* "Hitherto only found at Haderslev in brown coal, which had been transported from Norre Vium, south-west of Herning, in numbers together with *C. elongata*, Sept.- Nov. 1945." Brown coal (lignite) with its numerous plant remains can often have a moisture content in excess of 20%: in view of the number of beetles found it seems likely that they were developing and feeding on moulds growing on the vegetable fragments, leaves etc. on its exposed surfaces.

Since Mr Allens's original capture no further examples have been formally reported for this country (and I am unaware of any unpublished captures), but Hyman & Parsons (*op. cit.*) quoted Suffolk and Sussex on the basis of data supplied by the present writer for Suffolk and Mr P. Hodge for Sussex. The detailed information for the citation of these two counties is as follows:

East Suffolk : 24.ix.1983, Cottage Farm, Little Blakenham (TM 113495) – one beaten from old hazel sticks in cottage garden; *vide* Nash (1982; 1983; 1984) for details of habitat and other mould feeding beetles recorded.

East Sussex : 19.ix.1974, Vert Wood, Loughton (TQ 511135) – one under bark, probably of a fallen beech trunk.

On the basis, it would appear, of the heretofore unique reported British capture, Harding and Rose (1986) graded *C. fagi* as a species known to have occurred recently in Britain only in areas believed to be ancient woodland (Group 1), but the Suffolk information presented here suggests it should now probably be placed in their Group 2 as a species which mainly occurs in ancient woodland, but also occurs in areas that may not be ancient.

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